Deciding When to Become a Parent

Grades 9-12, Lesson 8

Student Learning Objectives

The student will be able to ...

- 1. state the likelihood of pregnancy when people don't use protection.
- 2. list three reasons to delay parenting until adulthood.
- 3. list three reasons that couples choose not to have a child at certain points in their lives.

Agenda

- 1. Facilitate an activity called "What are the odds?" using marked pennies to demonstrate the risk of pregnancy if people don't use birth control.
- 2. Introduce the purpose of the lesson using statistics.
- 3. Have students role play situations from the Scenarios: Planning to Parent Activity while classmates complete an Observation Worksheet.
- 4. Conduct a "true or false" activity to portray the negative consequences of teen parenthood.
- 5. Lead a focused writing exercise to reinforce delaying parenthood until adulthood.
- Assign homework.

This lesson was most recently edited on September 24, 2012.

Materials Needed

Student materials:

- **Observation Worksheet** (one copy for each student who is not participating in a role play)
- Focused Writing Worksheet (one copy per student)
- Individual Homework: Thinking about when to Become a Parent (one copy per student)
- Family Homework: Talking about When to Become a Parent (one copy per student) Reminder: The English version is on the last page of this lesson plan. You will find the Family Homework in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic at www.kingcounty.gov/health/flash click on "Parents & Guardians".

Classroom materials, equipment:

- Scenarios: Planning to Parent Activity (one copy, cut into six strips)
- 40 pennies
- 1 dark permanent marker
- Paper lunch bag, manila envelope or can
- 1 pair of scissors

Teacher Preparation

Well in advance ...

• Get 40 pennies, and use the marker to draw a single black dot on 34 of them (85%). Put all pennies in a small container (e.g. paper lunch bag, manila envelope, can). If you use a different number of pennies to match your class size, mark 85% of them with a black dot. Be sure to collect the pennies at the end of class.

The day before the lesson ...

- Make one copy of Scenarios: Planning to Parent Activity and cut it into 6 strips.
 Each pair of actors will need one scenario. You may choose to laminate these, especially if you teach multiple classes.
- Make enough copies of the Observation Worksheet for each student to have one, except for the 12 students doing role plays. This should come to the total number in your classroom minus 12, who will be doing the role plays. For example, if you have 28 students, 12 will do the role play, and 16 will need Observation Worksheets. In a class of 35, you will need 23 Observation Worksheets.)

Standards

National Health Education Standard:

• **Standard 5:** Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.

Performance Indicator 5.12.2: Determine the value of applying a thoughtful decision-making process in health-related situations.

Performance Indicator 5.12.3: Justify when individual or collaborative decision making is appropriate.

Performance Indicator 5.12.4: Generate alternatives to health-related issues or problems.

Performance Indicator 5.12.5: Predict the potential short-term and long-term impact of each alternative on self and others.

 Standard 6: Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health.

Performance Indicator 6.12.4: Formulate an effective long-term personal health plan.

Washington State Health Education Standard:

Essential Academic Learning Requirement (EALR) 2: The student acquires the
knowledge and skills necessary to maintain a healthy life: Recognizes dimensions of
health, recognizes stages of growth and development, reduces health risks, and lives
safely.

Component 2.1: Understands foundations of health.

Grade Level Expectations (GLE) 2.1.1: Evaluates dimensions of health and relates to personal health behaviors.

Rationale

There is strong and consistent evidence that teens who are motivated to delay pregnancy, and perceive the negative consequences of pregnancy, are more likely to delay pregnancy until adulthood.¹ Research has also repeatedly shown that sexual health education, including teaching about birth control, does not cause teens to have sex sooner or more often.^{2,3,4,5,6,7} Thus, this lesson aims to set norms about delaying pregnancy until adulthood and using birth control if sexually active, to help reach the goal of preventing teen pregnancy.

This lesson addresses times when adults delay pregnancy in order to frame pregnancy prevention and thoughtfully planned pregnancies as adult-like behaviors.

Activities

Note: Instructions to you are in regular font. A suggested script is in *italics*. Feel free to modify the script to your style and your students' needs.

1. Facilitate an activity called "What are the odds?" using marked pennies to demonstrate the risk of pregnancy if people don't use birth control.

When students arrive in class, have each student pick one penny. You can do this by passing the bag of pennies around the room, or by having students pick one from a desk in the front of the room where the pennies are spread out, with the dots facing down.

Once everyone has a penny and is back in their seat, explain that each penny represents a couple. Instruct the students who have a dot on their penny to move to one side of the room, and the students without a dot to move to the other side of the room. Tell the class that if 100 couples had sex for a year, 85 of them would be pregnant by the end of the year.

Begin by talking to the majority, the students with dots: If everyone in the class represents a couple who didn't use birth control, all of you on this side of the room would be pregnant or would have started a pregnancy by the end of the year! Maybe you (pointing to a portion of the students) got pregnant or started a pregnancy the first time you had sex. You (pointing to others) might have gotten pregnant or helped your partner get pregnant within the first few months. The rest of you (pointing to others) would have become pregnant sometime by the end of the year.

Note to teacher: Many teens and young adults think they're infertile if they don't get pregnant soon after having unprotected sex. In the sample script above, you are making the point that the majority of teens (with dots on their penny) would get pregnant **throughout** the year.

Now, walk to the other side of the room and talk to the few students who have no dots on their pennies: Assuming you didn't want a pregnancy, and that everyone in the class represents a couple who had sex without using any birth control, only you ____ (count them) would have been lucky enough to not get pregnant or start a pregnancy. Maybe a few of you can't get pregnant because you're infertile. Maybe some of you just happened to have sex at the particular times of the month when she wasn't ovulating, so there was no egg to fertilize. And probably some of you will get pregnant next year. Again, this all assumes you are having sex.

To conclude: **85% of couples would get pregnant if they had sex for a year without any kind of birth control.**

Have students return to their seats.

2. Use statistics to set a norm in favor of delaying pregnancy until adulthood and to describe the purpose of the lesson.

In reality, lots of people don't leave pregnancy up to chance.

Here's an interesting fact to consider. In the U.S., the average age that women have their first child is 25 years old,⁸ but the average age that guys and girls start having vaginal sex is 17 years old.⁹

Write **17** on the left and **25** on the right of the board, as you share each statistic, showing the gap between them. Ask the class: What are people doing all those years in between to prevent pregnancy? (Answer: Using some form of birth control.)

If you haven't done it previously in your class, use the Values Question Protocol to point out the range of beliefs about birth control use, when to start having sex, and when to become a parent. Your purpose here is to set a positive norm. You can find an explanation of the Values Question Protocol beginning on page 19 of the Important Reading for Teachers section of this curriculum or online at www.kingcounty.gov/health/flash – find "High School" and click on "Important Reading for Teachers".

Using condoms and birth control is a lot more common than some people think. Research shows that almost all women who have had vaginal sex have used a birth control method at some point (over 99%).¹⁰ In fact, almost all <u>teens</u> who have had vaginal sex have used a birth control method at some time, too (98%).¹¹ And more and more people are using two methods at once: condoms plus another birth control method.¹²

Note: If students challenge the average age at which women have their first child for their own cultural group, acknowledge that there are some differences between groups, but it is still in the 20s for every racial and ethnic group in the U.S.¹³

As you can see, lots of people work on delaying pregnancy until a later time. This is the purpose of today's lesson ... for us to think more about what makes it a good time to become parents. We will do that by imagining several different situations.

- 3. Have students role play situations from the *Scenarios: Planning to Parent Activity*, generating reasons for delaying pregnancy and preferable conditions for becoming parents.
 - Assign each student a role as either "actor" or "observer". Begin by asking for volunteers
 or assigning 12 students to be the actors. They'll form six couples. Gender doesn't
 matter. The rest of the class will be the observers.
 - Give each couple a strip of paper with their scenario.
 - Give each observer (the rest of the class) the Observation Worksheet.
 - Give the class only a few minutes to prepare for the role plays. Actors can review their scenario. Observers can review their Observation Worksheet so they know what to look for. Emphasize that they will need to use this information at the end of the class.

Remind the students that they are actors, speaking as the people in the scenario, not speaking in the third person about them. Give each couple a turn to stand in front of the class and describe their life situation, giving reasons for why they made their particular decision about how many children to have and when. Encourage them to be detailed and thoughtful. The couple must talk for a full two minutes. There is no need to specify the gender of the couple, unless they wish to.

During each role play, instruct the observers to check off each issue they heard the couple discuss. For example, if the first role playing couple talks about their educational plans, how much money they hope to earn, and their age, the observers will check off those three issues in the first column of the *Observation Worksheet*. If you have a small class, you can allow the observers to ask questions to the actors to encourage engagement.

After all six scenarios, discuss the exercise as a class, beginning with a report from the observers:

Observers only:

What were the most common issues the couples raised?

Encourage them to count up their tally marks.)

What were the least common?

Did you notice anything interesting or surprising about what you observed?

All (observers and actors):

Which reasons for waiting to become a parent seemed most important to you? Which seemed most realistic?

4. Do a brief "true or false" activity as a class to <u>sensitively</u> show the negative consequences of teen parenthood.

As you introduce the consequences of teen pregnancy, keep in mind that you are likely to have students in the class whose parents had them as teens, who have a relationship with someone who is / was a teen parent, or who are currently teen parents themselves. The goal is to increase students' perception of the negative consequences of pregnancy without stigmatization. Teen pregnancy arises from complex, inequitable social conditions and cultural pressures. As educators, we must be especially cautious to avoid inadvertently stigmatizing teen parents, or scapegoating them for society's social problems or their own culture's values. (See Rationale on page 4 of this lesson.)

Getting pregnant as a teen can make life a lot harder for teens themselves and for their children. It may also impact the teens' parents. Not just when they have a baby, but in their future as well. Many teen parents do an incredible job of overcoming the odds, especially with support from their families and community. However, it's still helpful for us to understand these challenges.

We're going to do a true or false activity. When I read you a statistic, I want you to give me a thumbs up if you think the statistics is true, and a thumbs down if you think it is false.

Read each statement aloud. Encourage students to guess. After each statement, give the correct answer.

As you share the statistics, reinforce that they are averages. For example, *This shows* the most common experience, which is not the experience of every single teen parent and their children. It is also an opportunity to reinforce the ways that we can support teen parents.

a. Becoming a parent is the leading cause of dropping out of school among teen girls.¹⁴
 TRUE

- Eight out of 10 teen mothers do not marry the father of their first child. However, these dads are still able to pay enough child support to help the mom and baby get by. FALSE
 - (It's true that eight out of 10 teen moms do <u>not</u> marry the father of their first child. However, these fathers usually pay very little child support, often because they are quite poor themselves.)¹⁵
- c. 64 out of 100 children grow up in poverty when: the mother gave birth as a teen, the parents were unmarried when the child was born, and the mother did not receive a high school diploma or GED.¹⁶ TRUE
 - (In fact, only seven out of 100 children grow up in poverty when none of these three things happen.¹⁷ That's a huge difference.)
- d. Sons of teen moms are no more likely to end up in prison than anyone else. **FALSE** (Actually, the sons of teen moms are twice as likely to end up in prison than the sons of moms in their early 20s).¹⁸
- e. The children of teen mothers are more likely to be born too early and not weigh enough compared to children of older mothers. This raises the chance of infant death and many other medical problems. TRUE

Summarize the activity with the following discussion questions:

- Were you surprised by any of these statistics? Which ones and why?
- How did it change your thinking about teen pregnancy, if at all?
- Did it give you any ideas about how to support teens who are already pregnant or who are parents?
- Do you have any ideas about how to support friends in delaying pregnancy until they're older?
- 5. Conclude the lesson by leading a focused writing exercise to reinforce delaying parenthood (or subsequent pregnancies) until adulthood.

Hand out the *Focused Writing Worksheet* to each student. Have students pick the one sentence that fits their life situation the closest and complete the sentence. Acknowledge that this might be the first time most of them have ever thought about these questions. Encourage students to consider some of the issues they discussed today, and think about how it might apply to their own lives.

When students are finished, thank everyone for their thoughtful participation today. Let them know that you will continue the discussion of pregnancy prevention by focusing on birth control methods tomorrow.

6. Assign homework.

- a. Individual Homework: Thinking about When to Become a Parent
- b. Family Homework: Talking about When to Become a Parent
 Reminder: The English version is on the last page of this lesson plan. You will find the
 Family Homework in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic at
 www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH click on "Parents & Guardians".

Related Activities for Integrated Learning

SOCIAL STUDIES

In the United States, the average number of children per family has decreased from seven children in 1800²¹ to two children in the present²². Have students research the factors that have contributed to this change. One option is to break them into small groups, giving each group a different factor, such as children's role in supporting the family, changing women's roles, the availability of birth control, improvements in public health (for example, fewer children dying), the cost of raising children, and the shift from agrarian to industrial society. You could ask the last group to compare family size numbers with the percentage of people in farming in several nations. Have students report their findings back to the class.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Use sentence stems to extend the focused writing exercise into a journal entry.

- The best thing about having a child is ... because ...
- The hardest thing about having a child is ... because ...
- I think the best age to start a family is ... because ...
- If I have a child (or have another child), I need to accomplish these things first ...
- My family, culture, or religion believes that a person should start a family when ...

TECHNOLOGY

Have students each create an Excel bar graph to convey the percent of people using birth control. What observations can they make about the graph? Are sexually active teens using protection more often or less often than they expected? What differences do they see between genders? How does having an older partner affect pregnancy prevention?

Who	% Using Birth Control ²³
Female teen, most recent time having sex	83%
Female teen, first time having sex	74%
Female teen, first time having sex, whose partner was 4 or more years older	62%
Male teen, most recent time having sex	91%
Male teen, first time having sex	82%
Male teen, first time, whose partner was 2 or more years older	78%

Scenarios: Planning to Parent Activity

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1.	You are both 18. You have decided to either have a baby or adopt a child when you're 22. Prepare to tell the class why you decided to wait until you're a little older.
2.	You are both 17 and you have a toddler. You don't want to have another child for a while. Prepare to explain to the class why you want to wait until you're older until you have another child.
3.	You are both 22. Neither of you have any biological children, and you don't plan to. You are helping to raise the child of another family member. Prepare to explain to the class why you decided not to have children.
4.	You are both 29 and have recently had your first baby. Prepare to explain to the class why you are glad you waited until now to have a child.
5.	You are both 25. You have one child and would like one more. Then you plan to stop. Prepare to tell the class why.
6.	You are both 23 and have both always wanted a big family, at least five children. You are planning to adopt some of your children from foster care. Prepare to tell the class how you made this decision.

PERIOD:

NAME:

Observation Worksheet

Our class will be observing six role plays. For each role play, keep track of which issues the couple discusses by putting a check in the box. The blank boxes are for you to write in any issues that are not already listed

Issue	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Money, job							
Good place to live, house							
Age and maturity							
Personal qualities (patient, responsible, etc.)							
Plans for education and career							
Interest in being a parent							
Love of children							
Good relationship with partner (ability to work out differences, good communication, respect, etc.)							
Committed partnership (marriage, life commitment, already built trust, etc.)							
Support (partner, family, friends to help out)							
Other responsibilities (still in school, other kids, etc.)							
Serious problems (addiction, violence, etc.)							

Focused Writing Worksheet

Pick one sentence below that is the best match for you. Fill in the blanks. Use the back of the page if you need more room to express your ideas. NAME ______PERIOD _____ For students who have never had a child... 1. I plan to have my first child when ______ 2. I do not plan to have any children because ______ For students who already have a child ... 1. I plan to have my next child when ______ I do not plan to have any more children because _______

Individual Homework: Thinking about When to Become a Parent

Journal your own personal answers to these questions. You only need to show me that you've written on one or both sides of this or another sheet of paper. I won't keep your sheet or read your answers – they are personal.

- Think about the Focused Writing Worksheet we did in class today. You wrote briefly about your own thinking about whether and when to have children. Or if you are already a parent, you wrote about whether and when to have another child. Begin by rewriting your answer to the Focused Writing exercise.
- How strongly do you feel about your answer? Why?
- What will it take for you to achieve these plans?

Family Homework: Talking about When to Become a Parent

All Family Homework is optional. You may complete an Individual Homework assignment instead.

ASK THE ADULT:

If the adult has one or more children, either through birth, fostering or adoption, ask these questions:

- How did you decide how many children to have?
- At what age did you have your first child?
- What were the advantages and disadvantages, if any, of having a child at that time in your life?
- What do you think would be a good age for me to have a child, if I decide to start
 a family? (Or, if the student is already a parent: What do you think would be a
 good age for me to have another child, if that's what I want.)

If the adult doesn't have children, ask these questions:

- Did you make a conscious decision not to have children?
- If it was a conscious decision: What contributed to your decision?
- What do you think would be a good age for me to have a child, if I decide to start
 a family? (Or, if the student is already a parent: What do you think would be a
 good age for me to have another child, if that's what I want.)

ASK THE STUDENT:

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- Do you think you'll have a child or children some day? (Or, if the student is already a parent: Do you think you'll have another child or children some day?)
- Why or why not?
- If yes, how will you know when it's the right time for you?

Family Homework: Deciding When to Become a Parent – Confirmation Slip						
FOR FUL	L CREDIT, THIS HOMEWORK IS DUE:					
We have completed the	his homework exercise.					
Date:	student's signature					
	signature of family member or trusted adult					

References:

¹ Kirby, D. (2005). *Executive summary: Sexual risk and protective factors*. Washington DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

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³ Kirby, D. et al. (2005). *Impact of sex and HIV education programs on sexual behaviors of youth in developing and developed countries*. Research Triangle Park, NC: Family Health International.

⁴ Alford, S. (2003). Science and success: Sex education and other programs that work to prevent teen pregnancy, HIV & sexually transmitted infections. Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth.

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⁶ UNAIDS. (1997). *Impact of HIV and sexual health education on the sexual behaviour of young people: a review update*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNAIDS.

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⁸ Mathews, T.J., & Hamilton, B.E. (2009). Delayed childbearing: More women are having their first child later in life. *National Center for Health Statistics Data Brief*, 21.

⁹ The Alan Guttmacher Institute. (2002). *In their own right: Addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of American men*, New York: American Guttmacher Institute.

¹⁰ Mosher, W.D., & Jones, J. (2010). Use of contraception in the United States: 1982–2008. *Vital and Health Statistics*, 23(29).

¹¹ Abma, J.C., Martinez, G.M., Mosher, W.D., & Dawson, B.S. (2004). Teenagers in the United States: Sexual activity, contraceptive use, and childbearing. *Vital and Health Statistics*, *23*(24).

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¹⁹ March of Dimes. (2004). Teenage Pregnancy. Quick Reference and Fact Sheets.

²⁰ Brein, M.J., & Willis, R.J. (1997). Costs and consequences for fathers. In Maynard, R., (Ed.), Kids having kids: Economic and social consequences of teen pregnancy, 95-143. Urban Institute Press: Washington, DC.

²¹ Centers for Disease Control. (1999). Achievements in public health, 1900-1999: Family planning. MMWR Weekly, 48(47), 1073-1080. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm4847a1.htm.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2007). World population prospects. New York: United Nations. Retrieved from www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2006/WPP2006 Highlights rev.pdf.

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